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THE ASPHODEL.

BY AGNES LEE.

I.

THE MOTHER.

Now all the skill in Honolulu fails
To keep my English motherhood from loss,
While every hour upon my threshold nails
The deepening shadow of a tiny cross.

He is so small to go alone, to live
Alone. He never was alone before!
He is so loving, quivering, sensitive,
Viable with the breath of beauty, sore
And struck discordant by what is not fair;
So loving, too, so tender; and, whereas
His years are seven, he never could outwear
The dear appealing ways a baby has.
Yet when I sorrow, then, oh, very close,
His cheek against my cheek, he often seems
The mother, I the child, so deep he knows,
Like a still meadow where the starlight dreams.

The priest was with me, when the word was cast,
To tell of parting since the world began.
He bade me think on one who, cycles past,
Renounced her Flower. Oh, but she gave a Man;
While, in my thought's recurrence, I must view
The daily crucifixion of a child,
Ever in some new grief, some horror new,
Until I faint for him, my undefiled!

To linger on the isle of leper men,
 Bare Molokai, where sickly noondays burn,
 Himself a little blighted citizen;
 From heartbreak morn till heartbreak eve to turn
 From its foul company to fix his eyes
 Upon a distant sail, a floating leaf;
 To hear at bedtime for his lullabies
 The strokes of the Pacific on the reef,
 And, in the dark, without a kindly kiss,
 To sob his soul out! Dawn the doom destroy!
 For I shall seek a softer way than this
 For my sweet love, my little leper boy.

To guide his steps! What holier joy could be?
 And with him in his alien path to go!
 But the home voices would be haunting me!
 Then shall he forth, a little outcast? No!
 Silence, my tongue! O speak the terror not!
 I know another way. The cure thereof
 May for eternal tears be had. Forgot
 Be now the creed that I was taught, and love
 Be stronger than Jerusalem's high town!
 Though anguish of my penance never cease,
 Look, Lord of Hosts, look, holy angels, down!
 I give my soul forever for his peace!

II.

THE CHILDREN.

Stephana. Our house has grown so large and still, as though
 Sweet music had just died in all the rooms.
David. And in the garden, where he loves to go,
 There is a hush beneath the heavy blooms.
Stephana. Why has he been three days a prisoner?
 Why does she keep him ever from us all?
 We saw him from the window look with her,
 But come he will not, though we call and call.
David. She said our brother wearied at his play,
 That he must rest; and one night more, she said,